partly structured, partly notational, sometimes talking to myself, riddled with grammatical mistakes…...
forgive me

Desire Machines by Amy Wu

intro:
The mythology of communication technology as the mechanism capable of ultimately transcending all that is humanly unattainable has lingered around since dawn of man. In the Book of Imaginary Media, Eric Kluitenberg (2006) illuminates the age old fallacy that machines are be able to magically alleviate the trappings of interpersonal connections, promising to cross the divide of living to the dead, to transcend the confines of time, to abolish physical/emotion distance and even to reach the divine. Inevitably, failure to fulfill these unachievable promises, contemporary and historic, imagined and realized media become compensatory machines, of which embody and become the sites where irrational desires are projected (Kluitenberg, 2006, p.8). Moreover, the end result of the embodied compensation machine is ultimately produced by the mechanism of desire. In Anti-Oedipus (1972), Deleuze and Guattari's notion of Desiring-production maintains that desire is a productive force producing reality, in itself " a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p.28), simultaneously " the set of passive syntheses that engineers partial objects, flows and bodies, and that function as units of production." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p.28). Before the desire machine flows into the realm of the instrument, desire as production is primacy. In an attempt to understand the set of relationships between humanly endeavors and its technological development, the desire machine as the productive impetus underlying compensation machines will be reflected specifically through its aspiration to connect to other dimensions. What are the consequences? How does it renegotiate and engender politics, space & time, consciousness and ethics? Where will its continuation take us?

" When considering the panorama of the failed hopes of mechanic imagination, a feeling lingers that technology is all about desire, frustration, deficiency, a hope of salvation-terms that sound predominately religious…" (Kluitenberg, 2006, p.9)

Technology, especially communicating technologies as compensation machines, a means by which humans have developed and produced to compensate for the inherent flaws and deficiencies of human communication is speculated by Kluitenberg (2006). But what exactly are these machines compensating for? The very existence of the myth that technology holds the power to actualize our insatiable desire is precisely because we dream of higher knowledge, progress, amplification of human virtue just as much as dampening out weakness in order to perfect ourselves and our societies. In the muddy waters between the world of desire and the illusion of technology, perhaps out of desperation, the self fulling prophecy of magic is born and imbued onto what we create. This magic, in itself a device permeating to communicating technologies trick us into believing its ability to transformation human relationships by connecting us to other worlds, transcending the confines of earthly limitations. Think of the amount of times the world thought a revolution would be triggered by new technologies. The hype of the techno-utopian dream of radicalizing and changing society has been a topic of discussion where an abundance of online and offline events are debated over and documented. Incessantly reincarnating, it flows from history to the advents of media such as the clock, telephone, internet, to the democratizing influence of blogs and more recently heated discussions on the revolutionary potential of online social platforms like facebook and twitter (Gladwell, Oct 4 2010. Jenkins, Oct 6 2010).

To understand the nature of this myth, we must journey back into history and trace the beginnings of our relationship with information technology. Where did the myth come from? Could it be that desire cloaked itself as magic, producing the myth that transcendence is attainable? Let us commence with the invention of writing. In Techgnosis (1999), Davis retells Socrates's tale of Thoth, the Egyptian god of magic in Plato's Phaedrus written around the year of 370 BC. One day Thoth (Theus) approaches King Thamus offering him the new techne of writing in the hopes that the benefits of his new invention would not only augment memory and wit, but amplify the wisdom of the Egyptian people (Davis, 1999, p. 29). In considering the acceptance of this gift, King Thamus eventually declines fearing that writing would create forgetfulness due to the reliance on external letters. Thamus speculates that Thoth's discovery "is an aid not to memory but

to reminiscence and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth" (Plato's Phaedrus). It's not hard to see why writing has long been appraised to be one of the most magical of transformative technologies, as famously noted by Walter J. Ong in Orality and literacy: "More than any single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness" (quoted in Davis, 1999, p.30). This technology keeps a dead persons words alive, untouched by the forces of nature, preserved in the realm of a mysterious timeless dimension - It's no wonder that people described it as magic. The fact that Thamus rejects Thoths' gift because he distinctly recognizes not only the illusion of transcendence but also that the nature of desire lies in its unattainability. Furthermore that desire itself could potentially cause different outcomes to what the inventor envisions. In a sense this validates the 'unimagined' latent power antecedent to technologies facade. Prior to the catalytic influence of writing on Western thought, regardless of debasement or enhancement, it is the machine of imagination, fear and desire lurking before the actualization of technology that is perhaps the most transformative. The restructuring effect of communication media on our consciousness is incontestable, but will nonetheless inescapably fall short of our desires. It is because of the pre-programmed shortcoming that the myth prevails, and precisely the reason that technology will remain dream machines and compensation machines.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1972) theory of desiring machines rejects the traditional Platonic logic of desire as a lack, lack of an object, lack of the real object (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p.26), instead defines it as real, productive, producing reality. They elucidate in detail that the problem of the old paradigm lies in the fact that one must choose between production and acquisition. Traditionally forces of desire are placed on the side of acquisition, causing desire to acquire something that it lacks. On 'production' side of this model, in referencing Kant, the notion of desire belongs to the "the faculty of being, through its representations, the cause of reality of the objects of these representations" (quoted in Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p.27). Therefore, desire, as everything everywhere, is not only real but a machine driving other machines in which the end result is the production of reality. Desire is a production of production, at the same time it perpetually mediates and links between continuous flows which are fragmentary and fragmented. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p.6) It is in this in between state, third space or rather 1.5 space, that desire continuously mediates. Allow me to digress a little, in science there exist a theory called the M-theory, the M standing for magic, mystery, madness and/or membrane (BBC documentary, Parallel universes, 2010). In short, it purports that universes are contained by membranes consisting of numerous strings, thus the only thing separating these multiverses are membranes. Metaphorically speaking if eroticism is the anticipation of desire, then desire is the membrane between flows of the familiar and flows of the ungraspable. The notion that desire is a retreating horizon is eloquently observed by Spanish philosopher George Santayana: "A fanatic is one who redoubles his effort when he has forgotten his aim" (wiki). This quote was also upheld by Chuck Jones, one of the artists behind the Road Runner and many other Looney Tunes cartoon characters, in the creation of Road Runner.

Desire machines have many facets and they are deeply rooted in biological, psychological, technological and experiential pulses. These are also machines connected, tailing behind the desire machines.
- these machines are not always easy synchronizable or stable, rather it is ambiguous, irrational and cloudy.
-they continuously couple the flows and partial objects such as earthy to heavenly. connecting living to dead, mortality to immortality, biology to technology, in other words to other dimensions, parallel worlds, membranes.
inventors could never foresee how the echos of the effects would influence the world. they could only ever see its immediacy and at most predict its long term affects.
　　　　example 1. The desire to connect the temporal nature of earthly actions to the heavenly divine is exemplified in the mechanical clocks of the 13th century Europe. Kluitenberg (2006) reminds us that around 13th century Europe, the role of the mechanical clocks shifted from regulating human affairs to becoming the medium in which connected earthly life to heavenly clockwork. The mechanical clock, developed by monks, became widespread in civic life during this era in medieval Europe. Later in that century, the clock emerged in monasteries under the Benedict order functioning to signal the seven canonical hours of the day to call for collective prayer (Kluitenberg, 2006, p.157). From this point, we witness the consolidated role of the clock in becoming the central medium organizing and regimenting the daily life and communication of the city inhabitants. With is centralized medium, the seemingly erratic life of ordinary earthly actions could be syn-

chronized and unified by the visible signs of divine clockwork.

example 2. The first practical telephone, invented by Alexander G. Bell's (1847-1922), was developed as a "machine with a transmitter and receiver that would send sounds telegraphically to help deaf people hear " (Black, 1997, p.18). We can surmise that as a teacher of the deaf, not to mention both his mother and wife were also deaf, Bell's incentives were to find a way to speak to the unspeakable. Lurking in his shadow however Thomas Watson, Bell's assistant, was the electrical hacker who actually built most of the early devices (Davis, 1999, p.81). According to Davis, Watson's practical knowledge was amalgamated with weird theories of the mysterious fluid of electricity and his own occult theories. "I was working with that occult force, electricity, and here was a possible chance to make some discoveries. I felt sure spirits could not scare an electrician and they might be of use to him in his work." (Davis, 1999, p.81) It may be interesting to draw attention to Watson's reference of electricity as that 'occult force', and the fact that he was not in doubt of the existence of spirits, but rather the usefulness of the spirits. It is disputable whether or not Watson was a loony, but the fact of the matter is that the " 'disembodied spirits' theory, as his diary notes, leaked into his researches with Bell" (Davis, 1999, p.81). The birth of the telephone, as it seems was conceived not only as a machine to defy the cruel laws of nature but a mystical medium to connect to unknown territories beyond rational life. Beyond its original purpose, the telephone has also consequently lead to the abolishment of physical and emotional distance, in which sparked a myriad of newer and more distance-compression devices such as the fax, mobile phone, software applications like skype.

Immortalizing Bell's and Watson's legacy, the telephone in a sense remains the ultimate animist technology. Admittedly, since the 17th century the electromagnetic imaginary has flowed into the realm of religion, medicine, technology and many 'scientific' men intertwined mystical and spiritualist imaginations with rational science. The eminent Thomas Edison, apparently 'enjoyed a life-long interest in the the occult and paranormal' (Kluitenberg, 2006, p.167). However it was towards the end of his life when having to confront the idea of death that he started working on 'psychic telephones', communication devices supposedly allowing contact with the dead. Though much of the research remains unrecoverable, this did help connect him to the likes of the internal Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) movement. Although his psychic devices were never actualized, this clearly demonstrates how the productiveness of Edisons' desire to permeate the membrane between life and death propelled the desire machines of the EVP movement and succeeding modern interests (e.g. Instrumental Trans-Communication ITC, AA EVP).

example 3. The desire to cross mortality to immortality, to transcend the confines of time.
- long now clock, the 10,000 year clock. this project came from computer scientist daniel hillis who noticed that society at large was shifting towards an infinitely shortened time span-time compression caused by digitalization, internet..etc Through the desire to metaphorically slow down time, this mechanical clock ticks away 10,000 years, one tick per year, bonging once a century and displaying a mechanical ballet once every thousand years. bridging time of human affairs with eternal wisdom.
-represented in Turkles' Video Games. "the video games holds two promises. The first is a touch of infinity-the promise of a game that never stops". the game continually exists, "but that for their growing fatigue, their 'human limitation' the game could go on forever." the sense of infinitude lies in its virtual existence. virtual reality's immortality as Matthew describes is both frightening and fascinating. it is this perverse desire that keeps his holding power. seduction, eroticism of delivering perfection to the deserving player.

example 4. crossing the divide of reality/virtuality, biology and technology. (transreal, transgenic, cyborgs) human/machine.
-rosana stones bodies. here is the idea of crossing universes becomes quite literal. Virtuality is a compensating mechanism as it prototypes reality. desire to cross human/machine boundary. to merge, penetrate to wear cyberspace. adding identity. cyberspace is space that perpetuates desire for refigured embodiment. desire drives…when we've reached the place..i.e virtual space, it creates more and more and more….(when we've reached the edges of human /machine we desire more than ever to cross it and be disembodied and re-embodied.) comparison of gibsons's consensual hallucination to marx's psychic reality? (extrapolate 'cyborg envy' -manifestation of the inarticulate longing of the male for the female)
- micha cardenas. contemporaneous to stone. desire to cross realities, calling it transreal, mixed reality. Artwork: becoming dragon.
"we can move to both real and unreal, existing in multiple realities, mixing realities, transreal." His desire of transreal identities is that it "serves to destabilize contemporary protocols of biopower by offering a space to

develop ideas of possibilities which can enable new demands for everyday life that are incompatible with such protocols."

-desire to fuse biology and technology. according to virilio's Art of the Motor, after the geographic expansion of the territorial body, science and technoscience has resulted in the gradual colonization of the entrails and organs of man's animal body. we are now heading towards landing on the 'man planet' (nanotechnology, transplantation). from superstructure to infrastructure. Virilio criticizes the endocolonization of the biosphere, we will colonise "that of a body-without-a-soul, a profane body, on behalf of a science-without-a-conscience never ceased to profane the space of the body of animals and slaves, the colonized of former empires." He also highly criticizes postevolutionary artist Stelarc (aus) of transforming the body into primary material, making a lab rat out of us. Here his exotic desire for some great out of this world voyage is merely an alibi for the technical intrusion into an inner world. His 'ear on arm' project is a soft prosthesis using his own skin, as a permanent modification of the body architecture. "An extra ear is presently being constructed on my forearm: A left ear on a left arm. An ear that not only hears but also transmits."

"The final procedure will re-implant a miniature microphone to enable a wireless connection to the Internet, making the ear a remote listening device for people in other places. For example, someone in Venice could listen to what my ear is hearing in Melbourne. This project has been about replicating a bodily structure, relocating it and now re-wiring it for alternate functions. It manifests both a desire to deconstruct our evolutionary architecture and to integrate microminiaturized electronics inside the body. We have evolved soft internal organs to better operate and interact with the world. Now we can engineer additional and external organs to better function in the technological and media terrain we now inhabit. It also sees the body as an extended operational system- extruding its awareness and experience. Another alternate functionality, aside from this remote listening, is the idea of the ear as part of an extended and distributed Bluetooth system - where the receiver and speaker are positioned inside my mouth. If you telephone me on your mobile phone I could speak to you through my ear, but I would hear your voice 'inside' my head. If I keep my mouth closed only I will be able to hear your voice. If someone is close to me and I open my mouth, that person will hear the voice of the other coming from this body, as an acoustical presence of another body from somewhere else. This additional and enabled EAR ON ARM effectively becomes an Internet organ for the body." (http://web.stelarc.org/projects/earonarm/index.html)

Stelarc's obsession of transcendence of the physiological constraints, is disturbingly manifested. he sees the body as obsolete lagging behind technologies' power and precision. his eerie tone recalls and reflects stones warning- forgetting the body is an old cartesian trick. "even in the age of the technosocial subject, life is lived through bodies." The desire machine is productive, but in echoing King Thamus, technology can have its fatal consequences..

-the unstoppable desire machine. the virtual space becoming real-space. kevin kelly and his fervent beliefs on the cloud. The one, sounds totalitarian . "total personalization requires total transparency….thats the price." his 'prediction' of co- dependency and utmost zeal in one machine is daunting. here his 'to do' list is reminiscent of religious fundamentalism..

to do…
there is only one machine.
the web is its OS
all screens look into the one.
no bits will live outside the web
to share is to gain
let the one read it
the one is us
(http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_kelly_on_the_next_5_000_days_of_the_web.html)

conclusion:
reiterate: desire machines propelling compensation machines. exactly that- it compensates. the more we desire, the more compensative it becomes, however " it must not be viewed as a goal or an end in itself, nor must out be confused with an infinite perpetuation of itself. putting an end to the process or prolonging it indefinitely -which, strictly speaking, is tantamount to ending it abruptly and prematurely-is what creates the

artificial schizophrenic found in mental institutions: a limp rag forced into autistic behavior, produced as an entirely separate and independent entity….Schizophrenia is like love: there is no specifically schizophrenic phenomenon or entity; schizophrenia is the universe of productive and reproductive desiring-machines, universal primary production as 'the essential reality of man and nature.' " (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, p.5)
(note to self: must compress quote)
-not a cue to deprive ourselves, because we risk the banishment to live outside of the real,
(as D & G note earlier, no such distinction of man-nature, industry-nature, society-nature. no relatively independent spheres or circuits, everything is linked)
-but to critically ask and challenge: where do you want your desire machine to take you.
- progress for progresses sake vs informed progression
-like the genie in the bottle: be careful of what you desire.

books
Black, Harry. Canadian Scientists and Inventors: Biographies of People who made a Difference.
book of imaginary media, eric kluitenberg
art of the motor, paul virilio
cybercultures-rosana stone
techgnosis, eric davis
anti-oedipus, deleuze and guattari
section 13. Librivox recording of Phaedrus, by Plato, translated by Benjamin Jowett. Read by martin geeson
kevin kelly: (http://www.ted.com/talks/kevin_kelly_on_the_next_5_000_days_of_the_web.html)
stelar: (http://web.stelarc.org/projects/earonarm/index.html)

still need to read:
the war of desire and technology at the close of the mechanical age